

## Boston Lifts Ban on Gas Tankers in Harbor

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*By David Arnold, The Boston Globe, Oct. 17*

Boston port captain Brian M. Salerno lifted a three-week ban yesterday on shipments of liquified natural gas through the city's harbor after "identifying and reviewing all gaps" in security.

"The decision was made after consulting with [Coast Guard security units] and reviewing several reports detailing what could happen after a catastrophic event," Salerno said in a statement issued yesterday.

But not everyone charged with protecting the waterfront is on board.

Boston Fire Chief Paul Christian remains dubious about lifting the ban, which was imposed in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 suicide attacks in New York and Washington.

"We believe the analysis supports our position that a catastrophic event could happen" if terrorists decided to target a gas tanker, he said. "There's a potential for an extremely hot fire jeopardizing the waterfront area."

On Sept. 26, the Coast Guard closed the harbor to LNG shipments pending a thorough review of harbor security. That day, a tanker waiting offshore to deliver LNG to the Everett Distrigas terminal was diverted to a terminal in Louisiana. At least one other tanker has taken the same detour.

For 30 years, Distrigas of Massachusetts LLC has made near-weekly shipments of natural gas from Trinidad and Algeria to the Everett terminal, using 900-foot-long ships that chill the gas to 259 degrees below zero to reduce its volume to a fraction of its vapor state.

Last week, the Lloyds Register of Shipping, a company that evaluates the structural integrity of ships, released a report on the security of the harbor. The report -- compiled at the request of Distrigas and alluded to by the harbormaster -- addressed local concerns that a terrorist attack on a tanker could produce a fireball that would sweep across the harborfront and threaten downtown Boston.

The Lloyds report stated that the ability to detonate a vapor cloud of natural gas "has not been demonstrated in experimental work and is most unlikely in practice." If ignited, according to the report, a gas leak would create a slow-moving, relatively confined fire.

But Lieutenant Eric Hahn, the Boston harbormaster, is doubtful that a report paid for by Distrigas would be objective.

"Sorry, I'm not convinced," he said. "I have this thing about someone in the business telling me things are going to be great."

Forty-six tankers, each carrying enough natural gas to heat approximately 30,000 homes for a year, made deliveries to the Everett terminal last year. That number is expected to increase in the next few years.

These deliveries furnished 15 to 20 percent of New England's natural gas, according to Distrigas. The LNG ban in

Boston reportedly cost the company about \$100,000 a day.

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